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THE RAGTIMER

JANUARY–FEBRUARY

1984

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THE RAGTIME SOCIETY

DEDICATED TO THE PRESERVATION OF CLASSICAL RAGTIME

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RAGTIME...
UNDER YOUR HAT

FOUNDED 1962
INCORPORATED 1970

THE RAGTIME SOCIETY
INCORPORATED

is a non-profit corporation having the following objects;

To preserve classical ragtime music and to pursue such other activities as shall serve to maintain and develop interest in classical ragtime music and music related thereto.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS
1984

John Arpin - President
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Jack Hutton - Editor
Pel Bell-Smith - Director
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Director
Betty Miquelon - Director

When is the last time that you looked at your membership card? That card says you are a special person who deserves to be rather proud of many things.

--Your Ragtime Society was a champion of classical ragtime more than a decade before most people re-discovered Scott Joplin through a movie sound track.

--A member of this Society discovered Scott Joplin's grave in a Brooklyn cemetery and made the world aware that ragtime's most famous composer lay in a pauper's grave.

--It was this Society which published Joplin's opera, Treemonisha, a half century after the composer thought the world had forgotten him.

Looking back, it is a miracle that a totally voluntary, widely scattered group has managed to survive as we have over more than two decades.

The point of this flashback is to remind us all that the lifeblood of an organization like ours is memberships. You can help the ragtime cause by sending in your membership today. And, while you're at it, why not sign up a friend?

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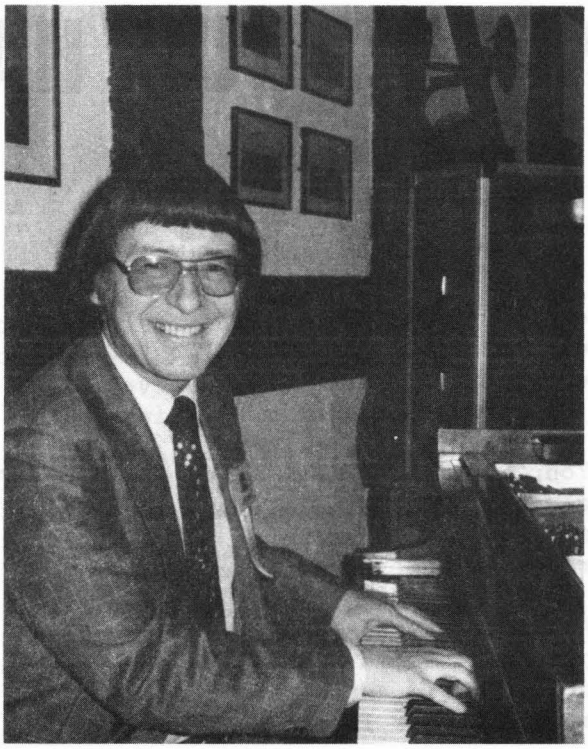
WHAT A (MINI) BASH!



ABOVE: Society President John Arpin and singer Dorothy Rose

MINI-BASH -- February 18, 1984
KORENOWSKY'S -- TORONTO

Master of Ceremonies: John Arpin

Performers:

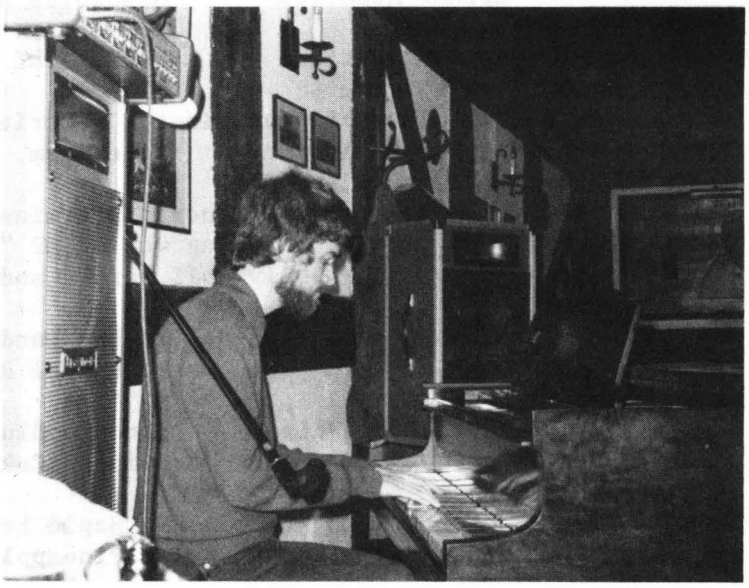
John Arpin	Rooster Rag (Muriel Pollock)
Steve Hull	Gladiolus Rag (Joplin) Graceful Ghost (Bolcom) Fig Leaf Rag (Joplin)
Norm Barker	Sugar Cane (Joplin)
Joan Packer	Kyrene (Stark) St. Louis Rag (Grabbe)
Lynn Wynters (vocal) / John Arpin	Pineapple Rag (Joplin) More Than You Know
Frank Wittmann	Doll Dance Making Waves (original composition)

Arthur Kendrick	Gladiolus Rag (Joplin)
Russ Merrifield	Maple Leaf Rag (Joplin)
Bill Beecroft (clarinet) / John Arpin	Memories of You (Blake) Rose Room

Short intermission and raffle
(Joan Young won an LP "Canadian Brass Plays Fats, Jelly Roll Morton and J.P. Johnson")

Wayne Adams (banjo)	Yankee Land Potential Rag
Catherine Wilson	Toronto Blues (Arpin) Swipesy Cake Walk (Joplin/Marshall)
George Young (spoons/ tap dance) with Steve Hull	Maple Leaf Rag Pineapple Rag (Joplin)
Reide Kaiser	Hop Scotch Rag Morning Air (Willie the Lion Smith)
Mel Collie (banjo/vocal) /May Knudson	Maime Leaning On A Lamp Post Alabama Jubilee (Moffett) Medley (Five Feet Two; Ain't She Sweet; Please Don't Talk About Me When I'm Gone)
Bess Fell	Come Back Rag (Chas. L. Johnson) Black and White Rag (Botsford) Kitten On The Keys (Confrey)
Jack Hutton	Dreamy Limehouse (Waller) Blackboard Rag (original composition)
John Arpin	Over The Bars (James P. Johnson) Fats Waller medley: Keeping Out Of Mischief Now Ain't Misbehavin' Squeeze Me Honeysuckle Rose Chevy Chase (Blake)
Dorothy Rose (vocal) /John Arpin	Embraceable You
Bill Beecroft (clarinet) /John Arpin	Body And Soul Avalon
Bess Fell	sing-a-long
Duo: Bess Fell/John Arpin	Chimes of Dixie (Joe and Amelia Lamb)
Dorothy Rose (vocal) /John Arpin	Second Hand Rose
Lynn Wynters (vocal) /John Arpin	Dream Lover
Catherine Wilson	Toronto Blues (Arpin)

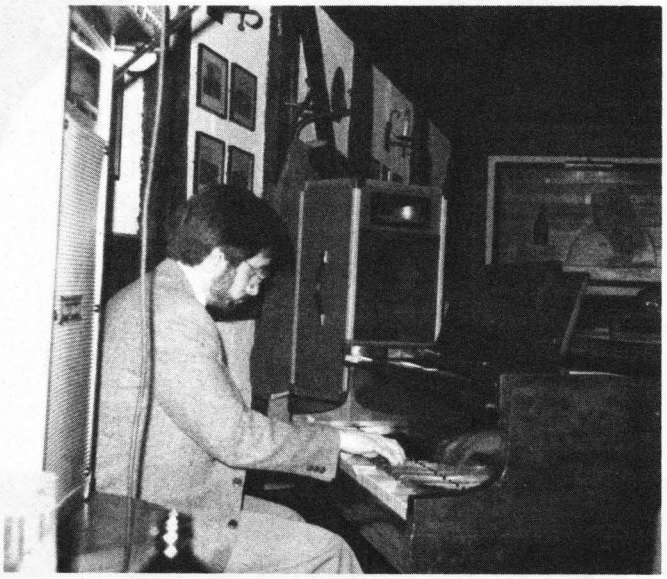
RAGTIME IS ALIVE AND WELL ...

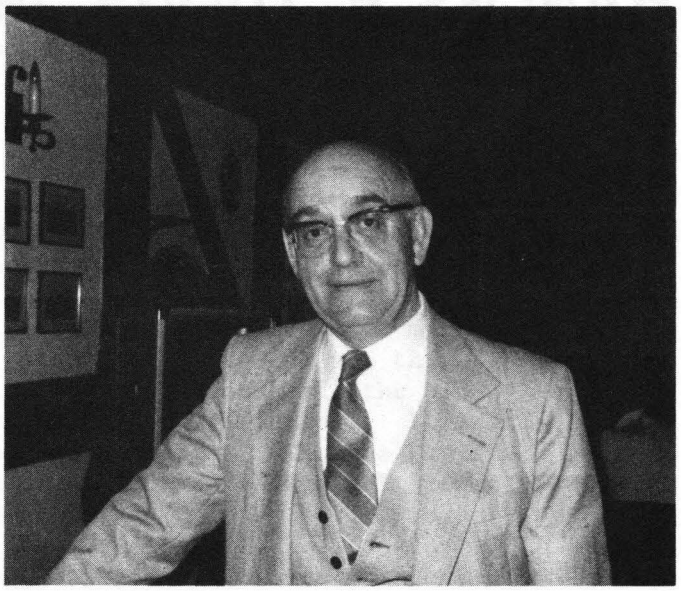


FOOTNOTE: Pel Bell-Smith says the Feb. 18 mini-bash was one of the best that the Ragtime Society has ever had, and he should know. Pel, one of the Society's hard-working directors, organized the first mini-bash in 1971. For those who like to mix ragtime and history, here are the dates of previous mini-bashes (courtesy of Pel Bell-Smith)

1) June 18, 1971, at Royal Canadian Curling Club
2) Feb. 5, 1972, at Dutch Sisters Motel
3) May 6, 1972, at Royal Canadian Curling Club
4) June 4, 1974, at Royal Canadian Curling Club
5) April 4, 1975, at Don Valley Holiday Inn
6) March 14, 1983, at Korenowsky's
7 May 14, 1983, at Korenowsky's

... AT THE SOCIETY'S 8TH MINI-BASH





A RAGTIME PHOTO ALBUM

--PREVIOUS PAGE

(clockwise from top left) Catherine Wilson; Reide Kaiser; Bess Fell; Mel Collie and Mae Knudson; (lower left) Pel Bell-Smith and Betty Miquelon

-- THIS PAGE (clockwise from top left) Frank Wittmann; Mark Wittmann; George Young (with spoons); Bill Beecroft; Steve Hull; (lower left) John Arpin and Joan Packer

CHARLES B. DAVIS JR.

MEET THE TAR TICKLER

By Jack Hutton

The RAG INDEX that you see in the Ragtimer might never have happened if it hadn't snowed one day five years ago in North Carolina. Strange but true, according to the Index's author, Charles B. Davis Jr.

"It doesn't snow that often down our way, so when it does everything seems to come to a dead halt. I had been thinking about starting the index for some time but never seemed to get down to it seriously. When our first bad snowstorm in years hit us one day -- I think it was 1979 -- I decided this was as good a time as any. After all, there was nothing else to do."

Charles Davis is no stranger to regular visitors to the annual Ragtime Bash in Toronto. Many of you who read the above, I'm sure, could hear Charlie's soft, musical, always polite North Carolina accent, just as his name reminds you of his annual performances of tunes that everyone else seems to have forgotten. There will always be a respectful audience for his eclectic repertoire of Joplin, Lamb, Scott, Morton, James P. Johnson, Waller and a host of lesser known ragtime/jazz composers.

The North Carolina musician, who turns 40 this year, can never recall a time when music wasn't the central theme of his life. It seemed only natural that he started piano lessons at the age of 5 because older sisters had been singing to him since he was an infant, and someone always seemed to be playing the piano in the house. Charles went on to take his bachelor's degree in music at Morris Hill College, followed by studies at the Master's degree level at Southern Baptist

Theological Seminary and the University of Southern California. Today, he teaches piano full-time (one of his pupils, a doctor, insists that he wants to learn how to play ragtime) and performs two hours every Friday night at the nearby Jacksonville Country Club. The mailing address says Midway Park, North Carolina, but that, says Charles, is a postal address for the convenience of a local military establishment. Actually, Charles B. Davis lives in Piney Green, North Carolina -- a hamlet whose size can be gauged by the fact that it has one stoplight. He is the only resident of Piney Green with 3,000 LPs, 100 reel-to-reel tapes and 200 cassettes. He is also the only one known as the Tar Tickler.

"That phrase -- the Tar Tickler -- reared its head out of my sense of humour late night," says Charles. "If you go back and read the earliest issues of the Ragtimer, you'll find that almost all the old ragtime pianists called themselves 'Professor' or a 'tickler'. I liked the sound of the Tar Tickler, and it seemed to stick." Charles Davis's sense of humour sometimes catches friends off guard -- like the time a few years ago when his stationery suddenly read "C. Brantley Davis Jr.", causing friends to wonder if they had been calling him the wrong name for years. "I saw how many politicians, lawyers and others printed stationery with a high-faluting middle name, so I did it as a joke. After a while, though, I decided it didn't sound like me and I switched back." Today, friends are as apt to receive a note signed with a bass clef and three notes -- C,B,D. "How many people can sign their names like that?" Charles Davis chuckles. "That shuts smart-alecks up real quick."

Let us know your reactions to the possibility of printing the index once we have finished our instalments in these pages. In the meantime, every reader of the Ragtimer can be grateful that it snowed that day five years ago in North Carolina.

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(to be continued)

RAGTIME RUMBLES

BY BILL McCROSTIE
Vice-President
and Managing Director

Unexpected joys of the Christmas season -- hearing from WALT and KERRY GOWER, TREBOR TICHENOR, DARYL OTT and family, TEX and NANCY WYNDHAM. We miss you!

Also a card from KERRY PETERS from far-off Australia and words from world traveller RAGTIME BOB DARCH. How do I know he's a world traveller? Within a few weeks, we received Bob's cards or letters from Germany, Mexico and San Antonia, Texas.

GRACE and CHARLES PETOT were welcome visitors in Toronto January 6th. They had brought son ROSS and his wife, KIM, to Toronto on their way back to Germany where both are teaching piano. Spent the evening with Grace and Chuck listening to JOHN ARPIN at Club 22.

Another one of the fine sounds around Toronto is JIM BUCHMAN's "Toronto Jazz", featuring RON JOHNSTON, string bass; LORNE HAMILTON, drums, DON OGILVIE, guitar; CHRIS CLAYTON, trombone; MALCOLM HIGGINS, trumpet; and led by Jim on clarinet and sax. Look for them!

CLYDE GILMOUR, Toronto's top record reviewer, had enthusiastic reviews in the February issue of Leisureways Magazine on Jack Hutton's Struttin' on the Keyboard and on Dick Hyman's Kitten on the Keys.

A tip of the Ragtime Hat to The Maple Leaf for their fine review of Jean Huling's article on Irene Giblin from the November-December Ragtimer. Also, thanks for the generous plug for the Ragtimer.

After losing Ross Petot to Europe, we have also said goodbye to STEVE HULL, a talented ragtime pianist from Kitchener, Ontario, and frequent Bash performer. Steve, who has just completed his master's degree in computer applications at the University of Toronto, can now be reached c/o the Cretan Research Centre, P.O. Box 527, Heraklio, Crete, Greece.

Dates to paste on your hat: Hoosier Festival, June 1-3; Sedalia Ragtime Festival, June 8-9; St. Louis Jazz and Ragtime Festival, June 11-17; and, of course, our own Ragtime Bash, October 19-20-21.

The Toronto Press club held a wake on January 27th before moving to its new quarters. About a dozen local ragtimers were on hand as the RAINBOW GARDENS JAZZ ORCHESTRA entertained.

RECORD REVIEW

by TEX WYNDHAM

Euphonic ESR-1224 "'Pinelands Memoir' And Other Rags", piano solos composed and played by David Thomas Roberts

Selections: Madison Heights Girl, Hattiesburg Days, Rock Island, The Girl On The Other Side, Fredric And The Coast, Kreold, Roberto Clemente, Muscatine, For Molly Kaufman, Forrest County, Pinelands Memoir

Available @ $8.98 plus $1.00 postage ($2.00 outside U.S.) from Euphonic Sound Recording Co., 357 Leighton Drive, Ventura, California 93001.

David Thomas Roberts' compositions stay pretty strictly within the boundaries of "folk ragtime", the earliest rag style, and his vision is consistent throughout this program -- a celebration of the pioneer spirit that upheld turn-of-the-century rural America, complete with its hoedowns (opening theme of "Madison Heights Girl" and thrusting locomotives (hard-charging main strain of "Pinelands Memoir"), as well as melancholic lament for times forever gone (the sadness woven via minor harmonies into the A and B portions of "Forrest County"). Though a Roberts rag bears distinctive trademarks, as does a Scott's or a Confrey's, there is enough depth and variety in his expressions to carry the listener easily through ESR-1224 -- the exhilaration of "Kreole" contrasts nicely with the long, moody, Spanish-tinged "Fredric and the Coast", for example. Dave plays well, has a special gift for creating melodies that sing to you and stick with you(especially apparent in the more ambitious works that make up about the last half of the disc), and has penned at least one undoubted masterpiece in the achingly beautiful "Roberto Clemente". An interesting and satisfying album that virtually all readers of this column will find rewarding.

Music Masters MMD 20066 "The Symphonic Jazz of James P. Johnson", piano solos by William Albright

Selections: Fascination, April In Harlem (second movement of Harlem Rhapsody), Keep Off The Grass, Concerto Jazz-A-Mine (second movement), A-Flat Dream, Yamekraw (Negro Rhapsody)

Available, price unknown, from Music Masters, 1710 Highway 35, Ocean, New Jersey 07712.

Bill Albright here brings his special combination of keyboard prowess, "legitimate" musical credentials and understanding of ragtime to bear on six James P. Johnson compositions, including three long works for the concert stage calling for a classical and rent-party musical background. "Yamekraw" and the second movement of "Concerto Jazz-O-Mine" are very absorbing pieces, the latter using strong melodies and both presenting a wide variety of perspectives on low-down blues and on two-fisted stride, all framed by, interconnected by, and frequently melded with "serious" keyboard devices; while the more pastoral "April

In Harlem" is a singing, soulful exercise in richly cushioned melody. The other three titles comprise two rags and a boogie; like the above-mentioned symphonic numbers ,"A-Flat-Dream" and "Fascination" are lesser known but worthy Johnsons, infused with the same gracefulness that is so apparent in the heavier selections. "Keep Off The Grass" is its old, familiar, white-hot cutting-contest-winner self, rounding out a well-done LP that is sure to please dedicated fans of the Harlem ticklers.

Folkways RBF 50 "The Piano Roll Artistry of Edythe Baker & Other Women", piano rolls

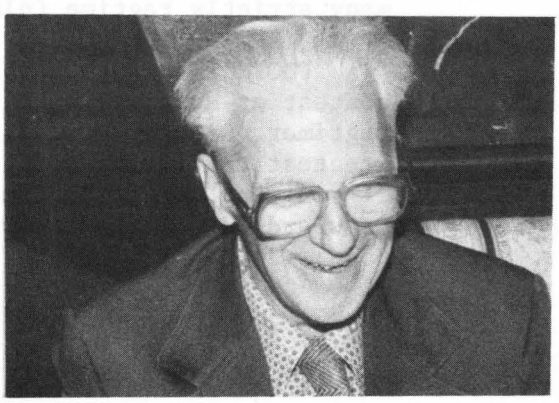
Selections and Arrangers -- Side One: When You're Good You're Lonesome; Jean; Swanee Blues; Racing Blues; St. Louis Blues; Yes Sir, That's My Baby; Blue Hoosier Blues; Sweet Man; all arranged by Edythe Baker. Side Two: The Melrose Rag - Sybil Lawnhurst; Would You Rather Be A Colonel With An Eagle On Your Shoulder Or A Private With A Chicken On Your Knee? - Bertha Wolpa; In The Land Of Old Black Joe - Eva Reeves; I Wonder Where My Sweet Sweet Daddy's Gone - Doris Goodwin; Never Again - Ruth Mack; Knockout Drops - Zema Randale.

Available @ $9.98 from Folkways Records & Service Corp., 632 Broadway, New York City, New York 10012.

RBF 50 may not be as consistently good as some of the previous RBFs which have devoted considerable running time to piano rolls, but player piano buffs will find, I think, that it presents a representative cross-section of the talents of those members of the fair sex who were arranging for roll producers in the twenties and late teens. Some were so outstanding that it's a bit surprising they aren't better remembered, such as Pauline Alpert ("Bye, Bye, Pretty Baby" is a dazzling, swinging, very well-developed roll), Vee Lawnhurst (one rarely hears a roll that comes close to playing jazz, but her roving bass lines and rich chording on "Changes" heat things up a right good bit) and Edythe Baker (at least on her better days, which was when she did the flashy "Yes Sir, That's My Baby" and the juicy, inventive "Sweet Man"). As might be expected, many were of average ability, with about half the cuts on RBF 50 (including most of Baker's) being fairly conventional sing-a-long numbers offering little in the way of development during the performance and using decorations that consist mostly of standard figures. Ragtimers will especially respond to the attractive, outgoing renditions of "The Melrose Rag" and "Knockout Drops", and, further, will appreciate the good cheer of all these cuts, even the more everyday ones.

Tell Elmer Renaud where you're playing

WATCH FOR A RETURN OF THE COLUMN, SOMETHING DOING, IN OUR NEXT ISSUE, LISTING WHERE YOU CAN HEAR YOUR FAVORITE RAGTIMERS ACROSS NORTH AMERICA AND ELSEWHERE. IF YOU ARE A RAGTIME MUSICIAN WHO WOULD LIKE TO BE LISTED, THERE IS STILL TIME TO CONTACT ELMER RENAUD WHO IS NOW IN CHARGE OF KEEPING THE LIST UP-TO-DATE. WRITE TO ELMER RENAUD, 68 HILLSIDE DRIVE, TORONTO, ONTARIO, CANADA.



RAGTIME IN THE MIDWEST USA

There is a new annual event for your ragtime calendar: the National Honky Tonk and Ragtime Championship Contest to be held at Everhart's Country Music and Pioneer Exposition at Avoca, Iowa, U.S.A. The date of the contest: Saturday, Sept. 1, 1984. Ruth Bingaman, a champion of ragtime in the Midwest U.S.A., is the chief organizer.

The ragtime contest was held last year for the first time as part of a larger gathering, the National Old-Time Country Music Contest which is sponsored by the National Traditional Country Music Association Inc. Twelve ragtimers entered, including a fine ragtimer from Kansas City, Mo., Ruth reports.

The ragtime contest sounds intriguing, but Ruth Bingaman sounds even more interesting in her correspondence with the Ragtimer.

"I present this contest with a preliminary introduction, demonstrating the styles we wish to recognize and to perpetuate. I discuss briefly the history of the music which got its beginning in its fertile seed bed in the music of our settlers and frontiersmen, along its rivers and railroads. I don't believe enough recognition is given to the early days of ragtime when it was developing in the so-called 'honky-tonks' and saloons, in the lodge halls and country dances.

"I am a ragtime player in the Midwest United States. At nearly 70 I do not wish to play steady. However, I keep very active in the championing of this more or less vanishing art. I play and do workshops at festivals and other historically related occasions.

"I practise several hours a day to perfect and continue my art.

"There are few ragtime players in this area, although I know there are many young people who would like to know something about it. The late Percy Franks of Kansas City was a good and personal friend of mine and he tried to show me 'good' ragtime and even made a long reel-to-reel tape for me before his death so that I could carry on 'good ragtime'. I have met Bob Darch personally and played for him and he tells me I play very nice. I place a nice 'light' ragtime, technically correct. I love honky tonk and really prefer it. I speak on the styles and techniques of ragtime and honky tonk, and demonstrate the difference.

"We had our first honky tonk-ragtime contest at Everhart's big Country Music Contest and Pioneer Exposition at Avoca, Iowa, last summer. It drew 12 fine entrants. I would not allow boogie or rockabilly and demanded that they keep it old-time country, honky tonk or ragtime. We would have had it strictly ragtime but there aren't that many strictly ragtime (players) around."

FOOTNOTE: Ruth says she attended a similar ragtime-honky tonk contest at Monticello, Ill., years ago and was knocked out by a female ragtimer, Dorothy Herald, who played "Original Rags". "She is the greatest ragtime player I have ever heard. Talk about articulation!" If you want to get in touch with Ruth Bingaman, write to her c/o 1415 Crawford Rd., Omaha, Nebraska U.S.A. 68144.

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